

Legislative Update-January 16, 2009

On January 12th, the Arizona legislature began its 2009 session. Because there is a requirement to do so, Governor Janet Napolitano gave her final State of the State address. As one can imagine, there was little attention paid to this State of the State because there will be a new Governor as soon as Governor Napolitano is confirmed by the U.S. Senate as the Director of Homeland Security. Secretary of State Jan Brewer is slated to be sworn in as the next Governor of Arizona, on Wednesday, January 21st.

Governor Brewer will enter the Governor's office facing the worst budget crisis in the history of the state. It is hoped that she will announce her staff and any new agency directors as soon as possible, although some appointments require search committees so it may be a number of weeks or even months before some agency positions are filled. It is known at this point that her Chief of Staff will be Kevin Tyne and Joe Kanefield will be her Chief Counsel. Brian McNeil will join her staff as a deputy chief of staff for operations. Additionally Ken Bennett, former Senate President has been announced as the person to succeed Jan Brewer as the Secretary of State.

The budget is appropriately the focus of legislative attention and time. There has been a "budget boot camp" the first week of session. In addition, the Senate President has asked that no committee put bills on the agenda until the 2009 budget revision is completed. This of course leaves the 2010 budget to still be completed.

As of today, Friday, January 16, 2009, there have been 550 bills introduced. In addition to this number there are 31 Memorials and Resolutions, including 5 House Memorials, 21 House Resolutions and 5 Senate Resolutions. A lot of the bills introduced are technical and it is believed that they will be used as "Strike Everything Bills" later in the legislative session. No bills introduced so far would directly or indirectly affect First Things First. We will be monitoring all bills, evaluating those that may have an impact on early childhood development and health and keeping Board, staff and Council members informed.

On Wednesday, January 21st, the Senate Healthcare and Medical Liability Reform committee is scheduled to have a presentation concerning Early Childhood Development and Health from the Joint Legislative Budget Committee and also from Elliott Hibbs and Karen Woodhouse.
<http://www.azleg.gov/FormatDocument.asp?format=print&inDoc=/agendas/0121011287%2Edoc%2Ehtm>

In addition state legislative matters, there is expected to be a federal stimulus package from the federal government, some of which has been talked about as affecting programs and services for young children. It is unknown at this time how the stimulus package will look and how it will affect the various programs that support young children and their families in this state. We will continue to monitor the stimulus package, research how it will be utilized in Arizona and keep all parties informed.